THE DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

May 8, 1967

Dear George:

I am enclosing a copy of Saturday's speech in its final form. I can't thank you enough for the great assistance which you gave me.

With many thanks,

Sincerely,

Mr. George Carver
Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs
Central Intelligence Agency
Washington, D. C.

NEWS RELEASE

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ADDRESS BY
DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE CYRUS R. VANCE
AT THE 90TH ANNUAL CONVENTION OF THE
DIOCESE OF WEST VIRGINIA
TRINITY CHURCH, MARTINSBURG, WEST VIRGINIA
SATURDAY, MAY 6, 1967 - 7:00 P.M. (EDST)

I deeply appreciate your invitation to address this 90th Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of West Virginia. It gives me a chance, as you may know, to come home again to the land of my forebears. And it gives me a welcome opportunity to meet with the leaders of my church in this state -- clergymen and laymen alike.

The Episcopal Church has always been concerned with the problems confronting men in the world in which they live. So, in your discussions here, I am certain that you have sought to relate your faith to the world that is, as well as the world that ought to be. In so doing, no issue comes more rapidly to the forefront of concern than this nation's involvement in Vietnam.

Quite recently, 1000 divinity students of many faiths wrote a letter to Secretary McNamara. It was a thoughtful and responsible communication in which these young men expressed both a moral and a policy dissent. "Large numbers of divinity students," they said, "cannot support the war in Vietnam because they believe this war is neither in the religious tradition of just wars nor in the national interest." They noted, too, that there are other Americans who are similarly troubled.

I appreciate both the depth and sincerity of this concern. It deserves the most serious thought. Because the matters at stake are so profoundly important to us all, I will devote my time tonight to a consideration of the fundamental issues involved in Vietnam.

I intend to examine both allegations made by the divinity students -- "that this war is neither in the religious tradition ofjust wars, nor in the national interest."

I do not agree with these conclusions. But, at the same time, I respect their convictions and I strongly defend their right to express them. Informed, disciplined, and responsible dissent is the very essence of our freedom.

In America today, one of the greatest barriers to understanding is the very nature of the dialogue which has developed over the issue of Vietnam. It is heated and intolerant. The lines, on both sides, are too sharply drawn.

We need, I think, to restore the national sense of balance, for there is little enlightenment in the dark words which pass back and forth over a gulf of misunderstanding today. We can agree to disagree. But, surely, we must all seek meaningful communication as a bridge to reasoned understanding and rational action.

Vietnam has been viewed too often in absolutes of black and white. The situation is not so starkly apparent as it is sometimes painted by the several sides in the debate. There are gray tones. The issues are complex and sometimes ambiguous. This is what makes it difficult to discuss or understand Vietnam. But we must recognize this beclouded aspect of the problem in trying to see through it clearly. Clear vision depends upon a dispassionate balancing of all the factors at play.

I have given much time to this balancing of the essential elements. Let me illustrate the complexities of such a process by brief mention of the troublesome grays on the Vietnam scene.

Certainly there is a shade of gray in the state of political affairs in South Vietnam. It is not ideal in terms of stability, freedom, or progress. But one must balance against this the progress made in recent years in the face of an armed struggle for survival. Local elections have been held, a Constituent Assembly has met, a new Constitution has been promulgated, local elections are in process, and national elections are to be held in September. Contrasted with the colonial regimes of yesterday, or the suffocating rule which North Vietnam would offer as an alternative, the hopeful progress of the Republic of Vietnam is clearly apparent.

Related to this is the fact that there are some South Vietnamese, recalling colonial days, who distrust the occidental and would like to see him leave. This is not, however, the view of even a substantial minority. The people see other Asians joined with us -- Koreans, Thais and Filipinos. They see young Americans helping to build a new Vietnam even while others are dying on the battlefield. They note that, with Americans, the energy and resources flow into the country, not out. And they know from history that we are not an imperialistic nation.

The Vietnamese Armed Forces are another case in point. They are not yet as effective as they should be, and will become. Conceding this, however, they have come a long way since 1954 when there was no national army. They have fought long and hard. Often, they have fought well. The measure of their determination is their sacrifice -- in equivalent population terms, they have lost more men in action than the total of American battle deaths since 1776.

Another example is the question of civilian casualties. Regretfully, we have caused some in both North and South Vietnam. But this has not been our intent. Rather, in defending South Vietnam, we have sought in every possible way, even at some risk to our own men, to avoid harming civilians. On the other hand, those who have inflicted this war on South Vietnam have set out to terrorize, maim and kill civilians as a deliberate tactic of conquest. The scales for judgment must be balanced accordingly.

And there is, without question, an element of native discontent in South Vietnam. This is rooted in the colonial past and the imperfect present, as well as in aspirations for the future. But, recognizing this, it is quite another thing to leap to the conclusion that this is just a civil war. It is not, and I shall discuss this more fully in a few moments.

When I have weighed all the facts -- those which are disquieting as well as those which are reassuring -- I find that the scale inclines sharply and without hesitation to the position which we have taken in Vietnam. Of course, there is room for concern, but not for real doubt that our course of action in Vietnam is right and necessary.

Turning back now to the statement of the divinity students, I find it difficult to understand what they believe to be a just war "in the religious tradition." Does this depend upon the particular religion of those who sit in judgment? Were the crusades a just war? Was the Saracen invasion of Europe a just war?

Is the use of military force ever moral?

The Reverend Edward L. R. Elson, Minister of the National Presbyterian Church of Washington, recently said this:

> "Military force as such is neither morally right nor morally wrong. It is the uses to which it is put -- the times, the places, the amount and the purposes -- which determine the moral or immoral use of force. And in this stage of the development of mankind, failure to use military force in the proper time and place, and for the proper purpose, can be disastrous and highly immoral."

The world has been racked with wars in the names of religious causes throughout history, but there is a transcendent moral ethic -- the right of mankind to determine its own destiny. Certainly this is at the heart of the Judeo-Christian ethic which teaches that man is created in the image of God, by which we mean that he is given free will to determine his own destiny.

Applying this standard to the conflict in Vietnam, is our cause just? I believe that the answer is an unequivocal yes, because our objective in Vietnam is to permit the South Vietnamese to determine their own destiny. However, fundamental to the answering of this question is a threshold question. Are we, as some charge, intervening in a civil insurrection 10,000 miles from our shore? Or are we assisting a small nation, at its request, to resist aggression from beyond its borders -- an aggression mounted by those who would dictate that nation's future by force of arms, and would take from its people the right to shape their own future. It is to this threshold question I now turn.

There is, as I have said, some genuine discontent and an element of disaffection in South Vietnam. This is hardly surprising in view of the tortuous and complex history of the Vietnamese people, and the fact that they are beset by all the unfulfilled aspirations of an underdeveloped land in an affluent world. The fact that there is some dissatisfaction which the communists have exploited, does not prove, however, that the Vietnamese conflict is a spontaneous, indigenous southern movement.

It is true, too, that there is a long history of Vietnamese nationalist resistance to foreign domination. This began at the close of the 19th Century, even as the French completed their colonial conquest, and continued unabated throughout the first five decades of the 20th Century. Vietnamese nationalism took definitive form, during World War II, in the Viet Minh organization sponsored by the Chinese Nationalists to harass the Japanese in Indo-China. But this movement, while not communist-organized, was joined soon after

its inception by the Vietnamese Communist Party which took control of the Viet Minh and subverted it to Communist Party ends. In so doing, they exploited the genuine nationalist sentiments to which the Viet Minh appealed and which gave the Viet Minh much of its strength.

The real political power base of the Vietnamese Communist Party was created in 1945 after Japan's precipitate surrender when the communists used the Viet Minh to seize power in Hanoi and proclaimed the existence of the (so-called) "Democratic Republic of Vietnam" under Ho Chi Minh.

In the days which followed, Ho prepared for and then fought the war with the French. A first tactic was to announce the "dissolution" of the Communist Party and the formation of a "popular front," the Lien Viet, purportedly to achieve both "independence and democracy." Though there were devoted non-communists in the ranks of this war, there was never any question as to communist leadership and control.

By 1951, having established a common frontier with Red China, the mask was dropped. The Communist Party -- the Lao Dong -- was re-established in public, and new war objectives were given. Instead of aiming for "independence and democracy," it was announced in all-too-familiar language that "The anti-imperialist and the anti-feudal fights are of equal importance."

In North Vietnam, this signalled the beginning of a campaign to completely communize the country. Americans should study this campaign to understand our adversaries, and to comprehend what their victory would mean to South Vietnam. The record is one of incredible savagery, violence and repression. Among the victims were many non-communists who had served in the Viet Minh against the French, and even some life-long members of the Communist Party. Their theory of operation was -- "it is better to kill ten innocent people than to let one enemy escape."

In 1954, the war between the French and the Viet Minh was concluded by the Geneva Accords -- a set of truce arrangements to which neither South Vietnam nor the United States were official parties. The seeds of conflict in which we are now engaged were sown in the months and years immediately following the termination of this earlier conflict.

In the aftermath of Geneva, the Communists took to North Vietnam the bulk of their forces located south of the 17th Parallel and many of their southern supporters. But, significantly, they left behind secret cadres to serve as future focal points for renewed military and political action, and several thousand weapons caches for future use.

During this period, the myth that Ho Chi Minh was universally loved and supported by the Vietnamese people was shattered. This fact is important, since that same myth is again in circulation and is sometimes reinforced by misquoting a remark President Eisenhower made at the time of Geneva. It is claimed, erroneously, that he said Ho Chi Minh would win the votes of 80 percent of the Vietnamese people in a free election. This is false. President Eisenhower actually said that in an election against Emperor Bao Dai, Ho Chi Minh would gain such a vote.

The fact that the Vietnamese people would have almost certainly repudiated a French puppet -- and did so in South Vietnam's 1956 Referendum -- does not mean that the bulk of them revered Ho Chi Minh or would favor his leadership. It is important to remember that some 900,000 northerners, given the chance by provisions of the Geneva Accords, chose to leave their homes and flee to the south to avoid living under Ho's communist rule. Many more were denied escape when the communists recognized how damaging this exodus was to their image and ambitions. This denial, incidentally, was a flagrant violation of the Geneva Accords.

In the first few years after Geneva, South Vietnam made strides toward stability and progress which were astonishing in light of the difficulties with which the South Vietnamese people and their new government had to cope. Despite the chaos of two decades of war, the legacy of colonial rule, the political inexperience, and endemic corruption, life in South Vietnam presented a contrast which was increasingly unflattering to that in North Vietnam. This was one of the main determinants of the communist decision to launch an insurgency which would stop South Vietnam's political evolution, recreate anarchy and chaos, and thus permit the establishment of communist power over the South Vietnamese people.

The Communist Party in Hanoi took several steps to implement this strategic decision. Cadres left behind in the south were ordered to renew political agitation and build up a political and terrorist structure. A ruthless campaign of terror was initiated, designed to undo the political progress that the government had made. Its particular targets were those local officials and workers, representatives of the Saigon government, whose dedicated activities were making some progress in improving the lot of the South Vietnamese peasantry. At the same time, the Party in Hanoi created a Reunification Department, placed it in command of a major general in the North Vietnamese Army, and gave him control over those ethnic southern supporters who had re-grouped to North Vietnam after 1954. This Department soon began dispatching these agents back to their native areas to reinforce the insurgent communist organization.

By 1959, the communists in North Vietnam were focusing publicly on their objective . ". . . We are building socialism in Vietnam" Ho Chi Minh said. "We are building it, however, only in half of the country, while in the other half we must still bring to a conclusion the democratic-bourgeois and anti-imperialist revolution." To these ends, Viet Cong agitation and terrorism were greatly accelerated, and infiltrators moved southward in ever greater numbers down the "Ho Chi Minh Trail." Six years ago, in 1961, the annual flow was already more than 10,000 men.

It is important to understand the identity and the mission of these infiltrators. Until 1964, they were almost exclusively ethnic southerners. It was they who built the political and military apparatus for the communists in the south, and it is they who usually still direct it at regional, provincial, and district levels. Although southern, they were devoted to communist objectives and subject to Party discipline. Without them, the communist movement could never have been developed into the force it is today. These men did not infiltrate spontaneously in response to legitimate southern grievances. Instead, they represented the cutting edge of a brilliantly conceived and ruthlessly executed campaign of politico-military aggression, developed by the Lao Dong Politburo in Hanoi, and completely controlled by Hanoi from its inception to the present day.

Thus, although it is true that many of those whom we fight in Vietnam are themselves South Vietnamese, and that substantial numbers of southerners support the enemy in some degree, it is not true, and never has been, that this is a simple civil conflict in which Hanoi took no role until after the United States had already intervened. From its inception, this insurgency has been run on Hanoi's orders to further Hanoi's political objectives. Viet Cong forces and the Viet Cong political organization are led by ruthless, hard-core communists who take orders from Hanoi. The ranks are filled, in the main, by very young men who have been conscripted at gun point, and who are kept in line by unrelenting discipline in the field and unmistakable threats against their families at home. It is these threats, in turn, backed up by military force and deliberate terrorism, which account for the support given to the enemy in Viet Cong-controlled areas.

The events of recent years are too familiar to need much recounting. Exploiting the problems and weaknesses of South Vietnam, the communists moved to take over the land through subversion, terror, and mounting armed aggression. Well before the United States deployed major forces to South Vietnam at the request of its government, the flow of men and supplies from north to south had reached floodtide. And today, nearly half the

enemy divisions in the south come from the North Vietnamese Army, and the Viet Cong ranks themselves are increasingly filled with northerners.

It is clear to me, then, that the war in Vietnam is no simple civil conflict. Its roots are traceable in history. Its mainspring, tactics, and even its language are familiar to all who have studied communism. It is an attempt by North Vietnam to impose an unwantedrule on a sovereign nation, an attempt clearly nourished by massive support from Red China, the Soviet Union, and other communist nations throughout the world.

In a word, what we see in Vietnam is aggression. There may be no precise, literal analogy which can be drawn to past aggressions because the form of aggression has changed. Massive conventional attack has been largely replaced by political subversion, intimidation, terrorism, and guerrilla attack. But the essential analogy remains, the hallmark of aggression remains the same -- an attempt to impose political change by force of arms and without the consent of the people.

Next, it is essential to understand that this is a war of limited objectives. The confusion over these objectives is at least partly to blame for the attitudes of those citizens who are troubled by our participation and who oppose our effort. To understand clearly what our objectives are, perhaps we need to repeat again what they are not.

We are not seeking to destroy or change the government of North Vietnam. We do not want permanent bases in South Vietnam.

We do not want one inch of new territory for America.

We are not even seeking to enlist South Vietnam as a permanent ally in that portion of the world.

Our objective <u>is</u> limited. It is limited because we want to halt conflict in one place without precipitating it in others. And, in Vietnam, it is limited to assuring that South Vietnam can shape its own destiny, choose its own political and economic institutions, and do so without military pressure from external powers.

But what is the objective of the enemy? It is to force his own political solution on the South Vietnamese. This is at least implicit in his statements; it is explicit in his ideology and in his actions.

I spoke earlier of the grays in this struggle. But there is an area of vast importance in which there are no shadings. It is clear and indisputable. It concerns the way in which the war is fought.

It is a fact that brutaility and wanton terrorism are deliberate tools of the communists in Vietnam, as they always have been. It is no error when the most talented members of a village are threatened, beaten, abducted, or forced to serve the enemy. It is no mistake when a village chief is made to watch his family murdered, and then has his head cut off. It is deliberate when the enemy destroys schools and medical dispensaries. It is intentional when he attacks the hearts of cities. And the cumulative, innocent victims of these deliberate actions now number many thousands.

We, on our side, have made errors on occasion. We have injured innocent civilians in South Vietnam, and we have injured our own soldiers. But we have injured them by error, error inevitable in the course of conflict. And we have injured civilians in North Vietnam in bombing attacks. But they have been unintentional victims, hurt in attacks against military targets -- attacks carried out with more restraint than any bombing attacks in history. Never has a nation had so much power as the United States today. But, most significantly, never has a nation so limited the power employed, or used it with such discrimination.

What we would like to do, for all Vietnamese, is best reflected in the countless kind acts of unsung soldiers, and civilians and the contributions to nation building, which now take place every day in South Vietnam.

Knowing these things -- knowing the true face of the war, on both sides -- I find it difficult to understand the convoluted logic which leads some to condemn this nation for "immorality" and to defend terrorism as a heroic struggle for "independence."

Still another issue in dispute concerns the efforts which have been made to achieve an honorable peace in Vietnam. Here, the contrast between our side and the other is sharply etched on the public record.

The communists, for their part, have said that discussions cannot even be begun without unilateral concessions by us. As they know, without reciprocal moves on their side, these concessions could exact a toll of blood from those who are defending South Vietnam. This is an unacceptable condition for achieving peace talks. Yet there are thoughtful Americans who believe we should accept it.

We cannot be that naive or take the chances implicit in such action. But we have, over the past several years, explored reasonable avenues to peace in Vietnam with more than half the nations on this earth. As Secretary Rusk has pointed out within the past week, the United States has agreed to

some 28 separate peace proposals. These were not just American proposals, oriented to our own optimum interests. They were varied in content, with some having limited and some having broad objectives. They stemmed from many sources. They would have involved such agencies as the United Nations, the International Control Commission, the International Red Cross, a reconvened Geneva Conference, or an all-Asian Peace Conference. They would have called on the good offices of such individuals as the Secretary General of the United Nations or the Geneva Co-Chairmen. Nevertheless, the record is clear: the North Vietnamese rejected every proposal.

I cannot believe that there is any real doubt as to which side has taken the initiative for peace, and which has cast its lot with war.

I believe, then, that we are in a just war and are seeking to achieve an honorable peace.

But what of the second allegation of the divinity students, the allegation that this war is not in our national interest?

We live in a world which is at once filled with hope and despair, good chance and no chance, trust and mistrust, ease and hardship, security and peril, even peace and war at the same time. It is a world suddenly, and significantly, grown small. The hiding places are gone; each man's need is the concern of every man' and each nation's problem is the burden of every nation. It is a complex world -- interrelated, interdependent, in ferment, dynamic, and demanding much of those who must assume leadership.

In the small world of today, the national interest of the United States is international. Our role of leadership is inescapable. We cannot fulfill a meaningful destiny as an affluent but passive witness to great principles in contest.

We have, as you know, not been passive.

For more than 20 years we have made a major contribution to the security and stability of Western Europe. As a consequence, that area has prospered economically, and both peace and freedom have been preserved.

Again, in Korea, we stood fast for the principle of self-determination. While that land war in Asia went on, domestic critics were both numerous and vocal. Some wanted ~~out~~ to withdraw; some wanted total war; and few could find reason or value in what we did. Yet, today, South Korea is freer than it has ever been, politically responsible, economically resurgent, and able to play a leading role in Asian affairs.

In Southeast Asia, as a further extension of our leadership role and our support of self-determination, we committed ourselves through the SEATO Treaty. We also committed ourselves, through the voices of three Presidents, to defense against aggression in South Vietnam.

All these commitments to principle, and our similar interests in other world areas, are interrelated. A principle worth defending any place, is worth supporting in other places. A promise kept in one place, gives integrity to promises made in other places. Aggression halted in one place, discourages aggression in other places. And what happens anywhere is known everywhere in the modern world of swift transport and rapid communication.

Can anyone truly doubt, in this world, that the struggles in Southeast Asia have their impact upon the internal struggles of Africa, the pressures of Europe, and even the peoples of the Western Hemisphere?

Would the success of military aggression in Southeast Asia, then, be in our national interest? What undermines peace in Southeast Asia undermines peace throughout the world.

Is it in our national interest to allow one large nation or nations to project their power across international boundaries by force of arms?

Would not the loss of independence of the 200 million persons in the nations of Southeast Asia constitute a serious shift in the balance of power against the free world?

This does not mean that we must become the policeman of the world.

It does mean that we must stand behind the commitments we have made if we hope to preserve peace rather than permit raw and naked power to govern. We act in our national interest when we stand behind those commitments; we act against our national interest when we do not.

In the time available, I have sketched in the outlines of my views. There is need for us all to ponder these issues in greater length and depth, and always with balanced perspective. For we must answer to our own people, and to history, for the conclusions we reach, the decisions we make, and the actions we take.

No one votes lightly for war, especially in the face of ambiguities which are more troublesome than the simplicities of earlier days. And the first vote of every responsible American today is for peace. But there is no peace in the surrender of principle, or in turning away from aggression; there is no honor in vacating solemn commitments; there is no morality in tolerating brutality; and there is no security or stability in isolation.

I would say to the young divinity students then: I share your abhorrence of war, but the sacrifice of principle and the loss of freedom are worse than the loss of life. Both principle and freedom are at stake in Vietnam, and so I believe that we are engaged in a just battle. I believe, too, that the national interest of a great nation is involved wherever principle, freedom, and the peace and stability of the world are imperiled. Thus, for these very reasons, I think we should be in Vietnam, and we should stay there until the aggression ends.

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